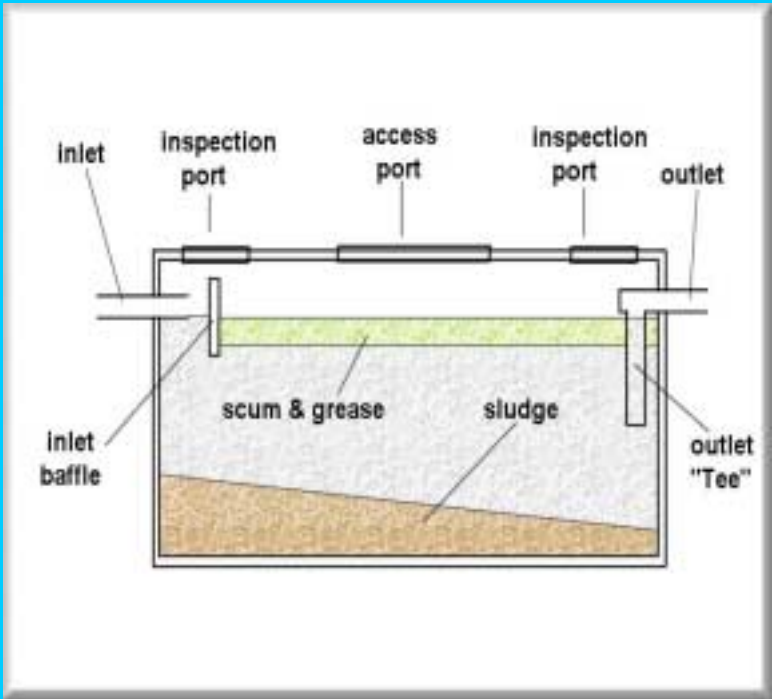


MAINTAINING YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM FOR MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE

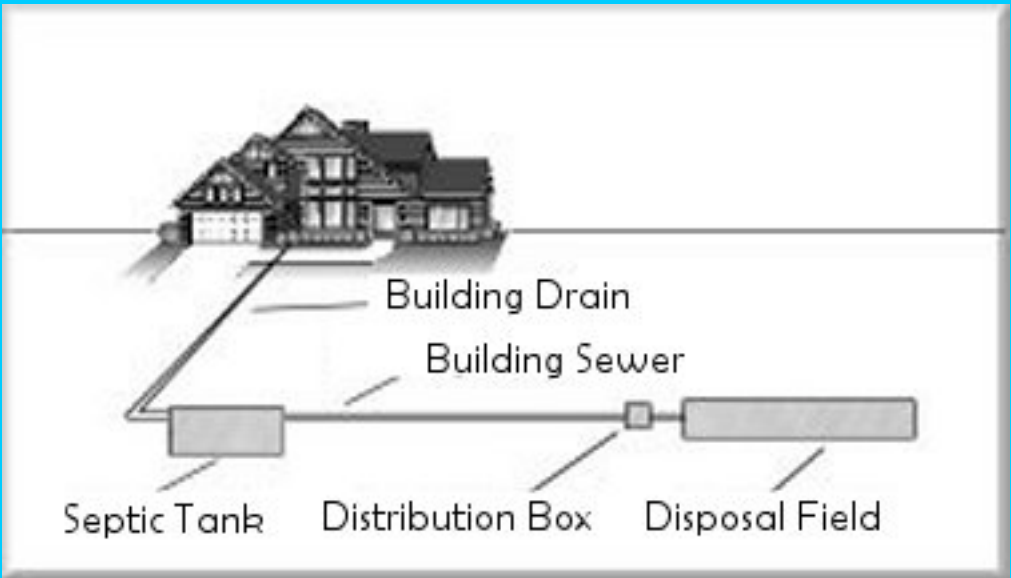
A septic system for a single family home can be a practical and efficient alternative for sewage treatment in areas where public sewers are not available. However, installation and owner maintenance has a significant effect on the working order of onsite sewage disposal systems, including their components. By following these simple steps, you can extend the working life of your septic system, make the system work more efficiently, and help to protect valuable ground water resources.



- Pump your septic tank every two to five years, depending how heavily the system is used. Insist that the pumper clean your septic tank through the manhole in the center of the top of your septic tank, rather than the inspection ports above the inlet and outlet baffles.
- If you use a garbage grinder (a.k.a. “dispose-all”), pump your tank every year. Or, better yet, remove the garbage grinder and compost your kitchen scraps. Garbage grinder use leads to buildups of grease from meat scraps and bones, and insoluble vegetable solids such as cellulose and lignin.
- Keep kitchen grease, such as bacon fat and deep fryer oil, out of your septic system. It is not broken down easily by your system, can clog your drain field, and can not be dissolved by any readily available solvent that is legal to introduce to groundwater.
- Install a septic tank outlet filter in your tank. These generally sell for \$100 to \$200 depending upon brand and model. They catch small floating particles and lightweight solids, such as hair, before they can make it out to the disposal area and cause trouble. Some models are also designed to capture suspended grease.
- Install low usage water fixtures. By installing low water usage showerheads (2.5 gallons/minute), toilets (1.6 gallons), dishwashers (5.3 gallons) and washing machines (14 gallons) an average family can reduce the amount of water entering the septic system by 20,000 gallons per year!

#1. Keep your septic tank in good working order.

- Space out laundry loads over the course of the week and wash only full loads. The average load of laundry uses 47 gallons of water. One load per day rather than 7 loads on Saturday makes a big difference to your septic system.
- Use liquid laundry detergent. Powered laundry detergents use clay as a "carrier." This clay can hasten the buildup of solids in the septic tank and potentially plug the disposal area.
- Do not use disinfecting automatic toilet bowl cleaners, such as those containing bleach or acid compounds. The continuous slow release of these chemicals into the septic system kills the micro-organisms which treat your waste water.
- You do not need to put special additives into your septic system. In fact, some can do more harm than good. Those which advertise that they will remove solids from your tank, usually do. The problem is that the solids exit the tank and end up in the disposal field. Once there, the solids seal off the disposal area, and the system malfunctions.
- Your septic system is not a trash can. Do not put disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms, paper towels, facial tissues, plastics, cat litter, or cigarettes into your septic system. These items quickly fill your septic tank with solids, decrease the efficiency, and will require that you pump out the septic tank more frequently. They may also clog the sewer line to the septic system causing wastewater to back up into your home.



#2. Be kind to your septic system and use it wisely.



Maine Department of Human Services
Bureau of Health
Division of Health Engineering
Wastewater & Plumbing Control Program